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Hostage negotiator returns to Lebanon

From Chicago Tribune wires

BEIRUT—Church of England envoy Terry Waite returned to Lebanon Tuesday to resume his efforts to negotiate the release of American and French hostages being held by the Moslem fundamentalist group Islamic Jihad.

Waite was escorted from his Paris flight by six militiamen from the Shiite Amal movement and the Druse Progressive Socialist Party, who pushed back photographers and television cameramen at Beirut International Airport.

The Anglican envoy, who pledged before leaving Paris to plead for the release of four French as well as four American hostages, declined to answer questions but said he would make an "important statement" later.

Six Americans are missing in Lebanon, but Waite appeared to refer only to the four who signed a recent appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury: Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, a Catholic missionary from Joliet, Ill.; journalist Terry Anderson; David Jacobsen, director of the American University Hospital in Beirut; and Thomas Sutherland, the university's dean of agriculture.

Islamic Jihad claims to have killed U.S. Embassy official William Buckley, who it said was a CIA station chief. There has been no recent mention of the sixth missing American, university librarian Peter Kilburn.

A Paris-based French diplomat and a Lebanese-born cardiologist arrived on the same plane as Waite in response to a statement issued by Islamic Jihad Monday saying one of its French hostages was in "a pitifully sick condition."

"I am coming on my own, for humanitarian reasons," said Dr. Razah Raad.

Waite, 46, who says he has already spoken to the kidnapers, flew to Paris Monday to discuss with French Foreign Ministry officials the statement concerning the

French hostages.

Local news reports said the sick hostage was Marcel Carton, 62, chief of protocol at the French Embassy in Beirut. He was abducted March 22 with Vice-Consul Marcel Fontaine. French journalist Jean-Paul Kauffman and researcher Michel Seurat were kidnapped a month later.

Waite told reporters at the airport in Paris Tuesday morning that he had "new information" on the hostage situation but refused to give details.

Later, at a Beirut news conference, he said: "I have very important things to say to them [the kidnapers.] I'm not prepared to say publicly what I need to say to them in private."

"I hope those who have responsibility [for the hostages] will see what an opportune time this is now for a major move forward; not just for limited causes, but for greater causes."

French news reports said the Moslem group has demanded that France release five members of a commando group who were tried and jailed in France for attempting to assassinate former Iranian Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar.

As a condition of the Americans' release, Islamic Jihad has demanded freedom for 17 comrades jailed in Kuwait for bombing the U.S. and French Embassies there.

The U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Reginald Bartholomew, flew to Geneva to confer with Secretary of State George Shultz on efforts to free the hostages.

Shultz was in Geneva for Tuesday's summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Waite, who secured the release of Rev. Benjamin Weir in September after 16 months' captivity, sought to clarify that he is not a U.S.-linked mediator.

He said, "My mission is quite separate from what is now taking place in Geneva."